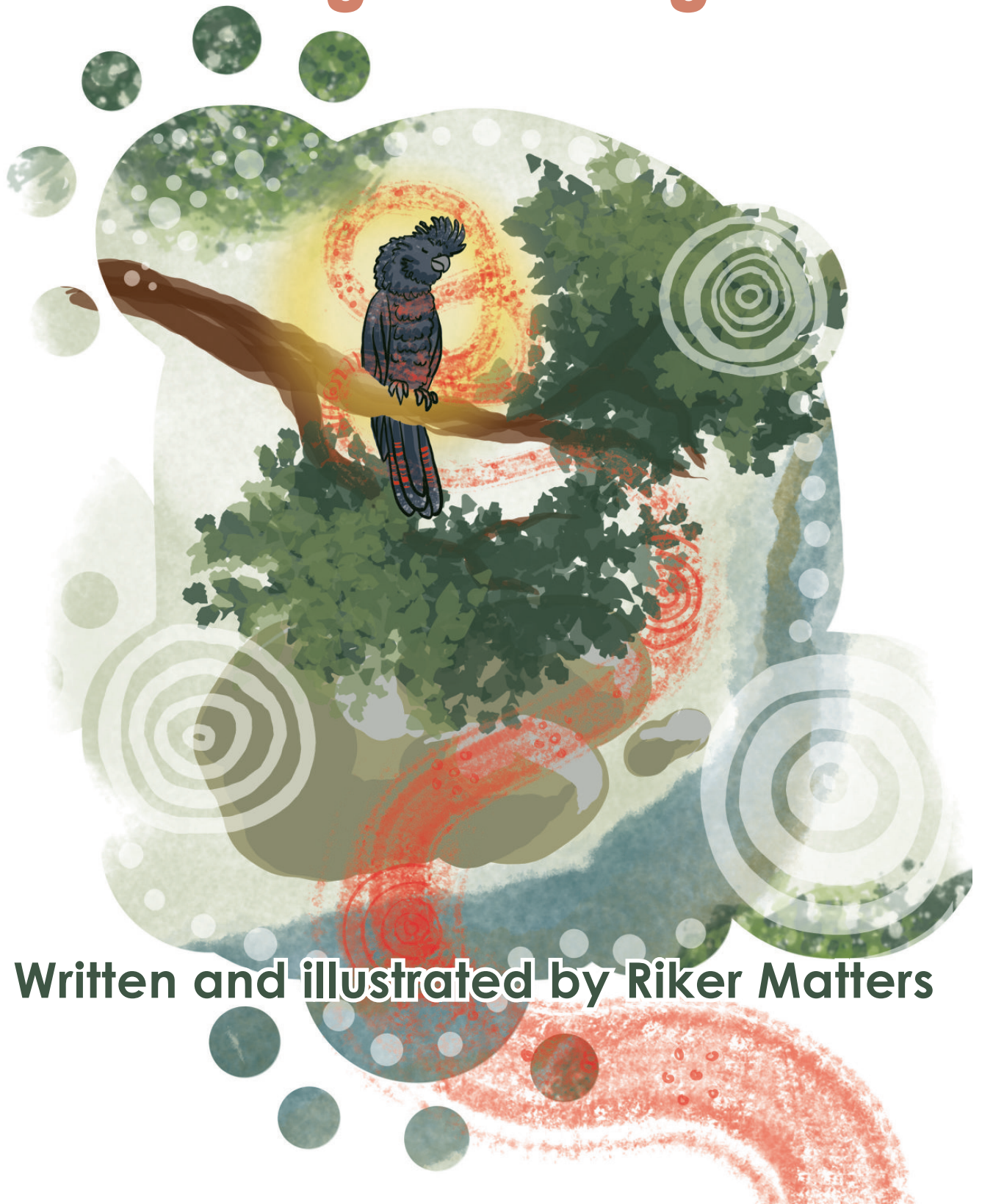


Upper  
Primary



# The Black Cockatoo, Finding His Songline



Written and illustrated by Riker Matters

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We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.

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Fire crackles.

Wind blows gently.

The children settle around the fire where it is warm, and the night sky is lit by the dancing flames.

"Ash, will you tell us a story?" Lochy asks as he walks over to sit with his cousins.

"Yeah! Just like Granny used to!" exclaims Sara, already cosy, next to her brother Sam.

"PLEASE!" Sam bounces and claps his hands together excitedly.

"OK, I'll tell you about the black cockatoo." Ash smiles at her cousins, the light of the fire warming her face.

Everybody is excited because they love it when Cousin Ash tells stories.



Cousin Ash begins her story...

Way up high, sitting in a gum tree, is a beautiful black cockatoo. His black feathers shine in the morning light. As the sun rises, it catches the red of his tail, blazing brightly.

He stretches his wings and thinks to himself, *I'm going to explore today and see how far I can fly before the sun goes down.*



The black cockatoo opens his wings wide and takes flight.

For a long time, he flies over rivers and hills, until he comes to a place he has not seen before.

He is excited! In this new place, he explores a pile of rocks, a fallen tree and a fresh spring.

Hours pass as he enjoys this new sky. Soon, the day is ending.



The black cockatoo is ready to fly home, but nothing looks familiar to him. He perches near a river and looks in every direction, but he can't see any landmarks he recognises.

He's a long way from home, but it's okay.

The black cockatoo knows that he can use his instincts to start flying in the right direction. His songline keeps a record. All he must do is remember.

He takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and sees the path in his mind.



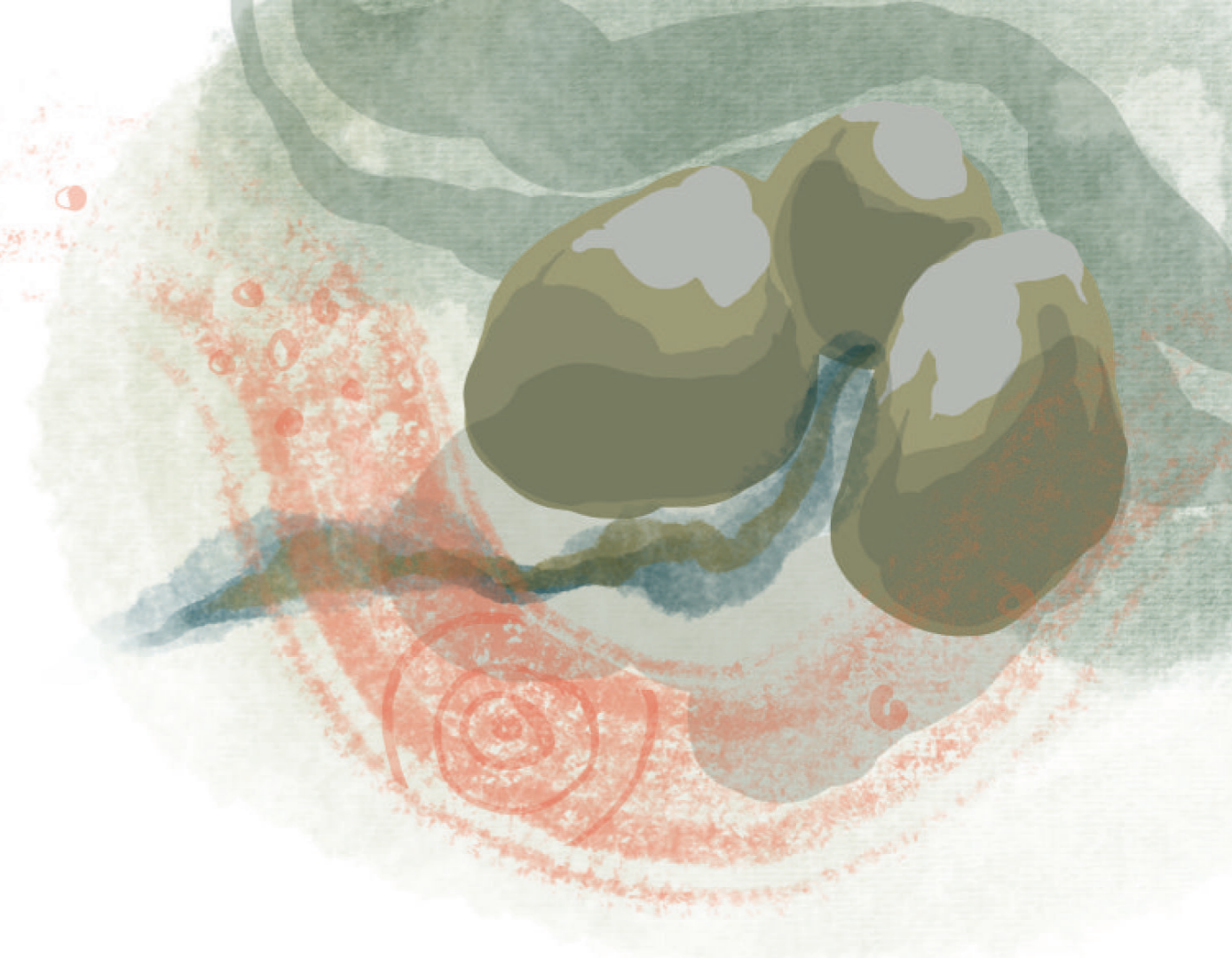
A faint path winds through the bush that he had been exploring.

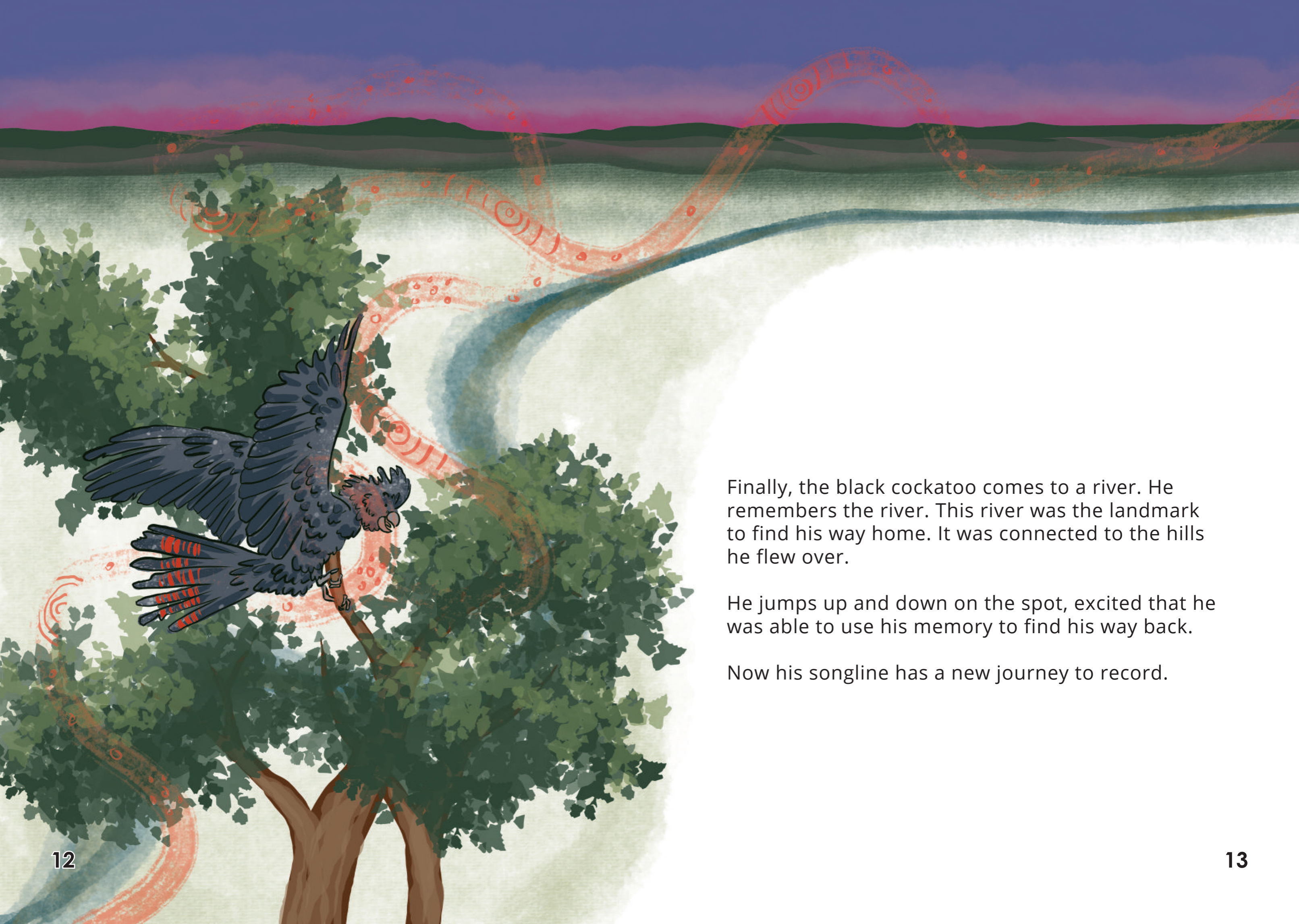
He follows it back to the places he discovered earlier that day.

A pile of rocks.

A fallen tree.

A fresh spring.

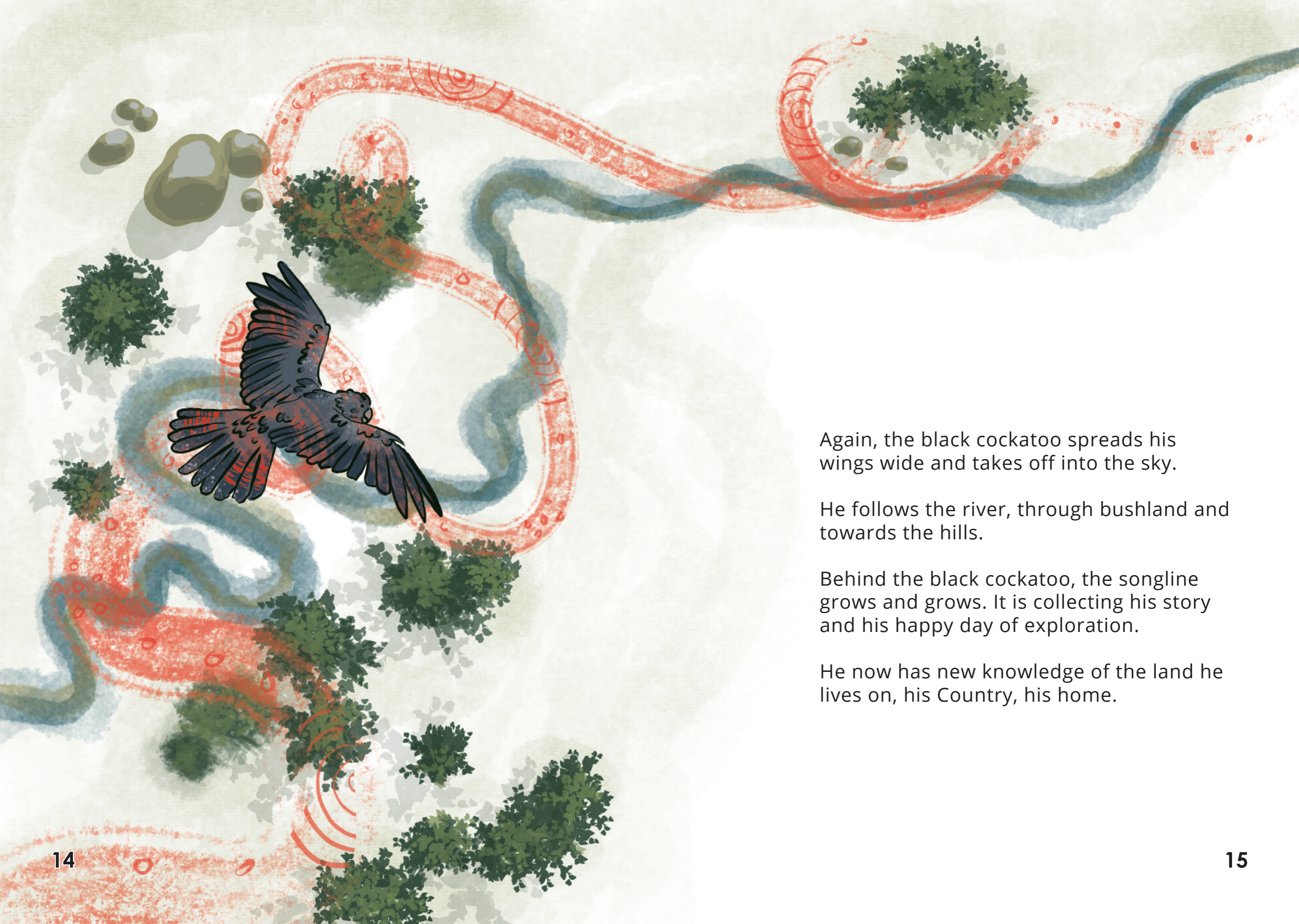




Finally, the black cockatoo comes to a river. He remembers the river. This river was the landmark to find his way home. It was connected to the hills he flew over.

He jumps up and down on the spot, excited that he was able to use his memory to find his way back.

Now his songline has a new journey to record.



Again, the black cockatoo spreads his wings wide and takes off into the sky.

He follows the river, through bushland and towards the hills.

Behind the black cockatoo, the songline grows and grows. It is collecting his story and his happy day of exploration.

He now has new knowledge of the land he lives on, his Country, his home.



As the black cockatoo flies over the hills, he sees in the distance his favourite tree.

He flies towards it because he knows it is a turning point in his journey to get back home.

He looks down and sees a mob of kangaroos settling in by the bushes for the night, some pink galahs noisily perching on a branch, and a snake making a quick dash to the safety of some rocks.



As he turns at his favourite tree, he is greeted by the sight of the great river that marks the place of his home.

He looks for the third bend in the river as he makes his final turn towards home. He sees his home tree come into view, and his family already waiting for him to return.



The black cockatoo flies into his home tree and lands among the flock — his family.

They greet him noisily, as most cockatoos do. He settles into a warm snuggle beside the other black cockatoos.

They ruffle their feathers in anticipation to hear about his exploration today.

The black cockatoo's songline fills the air around him and his family, as they make memories together.



"The end," whispers Cousin Ash.  
"Now, we should try to go to sleep.  
It's dark."

"But wait," Sara pipes up. "So, his  
songline helped him understand  
where he belonged and how to get  
home after exploring the Country?"

"And helped him remember his way?"  
asks Lochy.

"I think he made even more songline,"  
yawns Sam.

"You are all right," says Ash. "We all  
have our songline too. It shows us  
where we have been and guides us  
to where we might go in the future."

"When we go camping next time, I  
will take you to see Granny's songline  
paintings and she can tell you more  
stories about our family songlines."

"Yay!" they all exclaim.

"Now, let's go to bed before Mum  
comes out!" giggles Ash, quietly  
putting out the fire.



The cousins sleep soundly, dreaming of their songlines and how they are all connected.

How many stories will your songline collect?

**You can use these questions to talk about this book with your family, friends and teachers.**



What did you learn from this book?



Describe this book in one word.  
Funny? Scary? Colourful? Interesting?



How did this book make you feel when you finished reading it?



What was your favourite part of this book?

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## About the author and illustrator

Riker is a Noongar artist from Perth, Western Australia, with extensive experience in acrylic painting, digital art, illustration and design. Inspiration comes to Riker in all forms; she draws from the Earth, the Ocean, and what connects her emotionally to Country and soul.



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The Our Yarning collection aligns with the Australian Curriculum through the Cross-Curriculum Priorities — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. The collection provides an authentic opportunity for learning and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives because it is written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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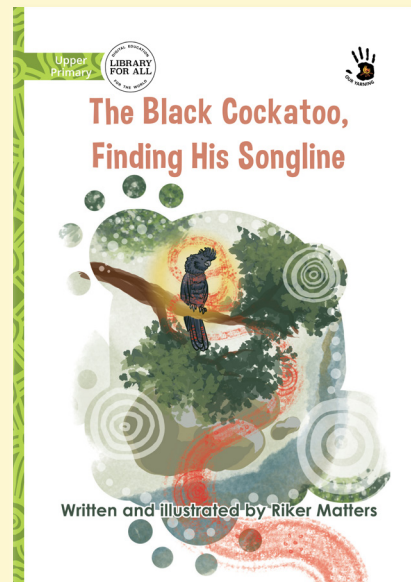
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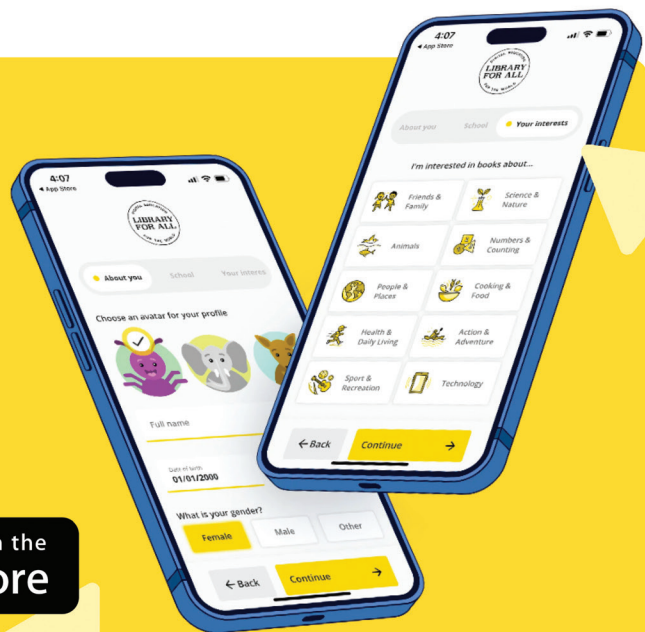


## The Black Cockatoo, Finding His Songline

A book that teaches you about songlines and how we learn to come home when we go out on Country.



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